

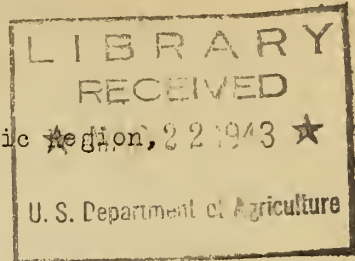
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Jan. 12,
1943
Reserve

"FOOD -- OUR GREATEST WEAPON IN WAR AND PEACE"

Given by Merritt A. Clevenger, Regional Administrator, Pacific
Food Distribution Administration
Civic Auditorium, San Jose, California
January 12, 1943, 8:00 P.M.



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Never in the history of the United States has there been such an abundant supply of food as American farmers produced during the past season. Every indication points to 1943 as a year in which even increased supplies of food will be produced by our farmers in response to Secretary Wickard's urgent request for more. The very recent establishment of the Food Distribution Administration augurs for better distribution of available food supplies.

California's farmers -- nearly two-thirds of them -- already have indicated, by signing up their planting intentions for 1943, that they will produce greater quantities of food than in the 1942 record season. They're feeling better already about prospects for workers and farm equipment and transportation than they did a month ago. But let's look through the telescope a minute.

If a man comes at you with a knife and a gun you don't stop to think about when supper is going to be served or whether or not your wife has enough butter and syrup on hand for your morning pancakes. You'll grab a shovel or axe or the first thing you can lay your hands on, get behind the barn and defend yourself from the attacker as best you can. Your first thoughts are not of your belly but whether or not you can stay alive. If you're successful in defending yourself, then your next thought will be about how you can work around to the house and get hold of your deer rifle or slip over to the neighbors and get some help so you can go after the attacker in order to lay him low.

This little parable finds its counterpart on a national scale starting December seventh, 1941. We were attacked in Hawaii. Our first thought was how

we could stop the attackers. You don't knock airplanes out of the sky by throwing apples. You don't sink Jap battleships by beating in their decks with beef shanks. It was wholly natural that our national mind concentrated its thinking on guns, bullets, tanks, bombs, airplanes, ships and men to man these weapons -- the only weapons we could use at the moment to lay the attacker low. It made no difference in what occupations these men might have been engaged, they were needed instantly to handle these weapons, even as the Minutemen at Lexington and Concord dropped their plows in the middle of their fields and took to their muskets. Life was more important to them than turning over a plow furrow. American freedom in December forty-one was more important to us than a full dinner pail. Without the one it would be impossible to have the other.

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So it was that all of our immediate national efforts were directed toward securing munitions at the outset of this global war. We defended ourselves successfully and finally reached the point, in the past few weeks, where we were prepared to take the offensive. Not until this breathing spell came were we able to lean back in our chairs and take a perspective look at the total war effort.

Then what happened? Plenty. But before discussing food distribution in war and peace, let's see just how food ranks as a weapon of war. It may surprise you to recall that most wars have been fought without gunpowder. Although those ever-amazing Chinese were credited with discovering gunpowder early in the Christian era it did not come into general use for warfare until the 16th Century. Despite the fact that our generation has been forced to undergo the two most devastating wars in history, there were a greater number of wars fought before gunpowder was a factor. All wars were fought without the use of the most destructive instrument -- airplanes -- until our generation. But -- no

war has ever been fought successfully in all history without food. More wars have been lost because of lack of food and more have been won due to adequate supplies of the weapon food than because of any other single weapon including guns. The blockade which prevented Germany from securing adequate food supplies in the last war was a potent factor in her collapse. Concerning our recent tragic defeat on Bataan, the statement was made that, "The lack of food was our undoing."

There was some evidence until recently that the importance of food in total war was not appreciated by some of those not directly concerned with its production or distribution. This condition has now passed. The President last week stressed the importance of food as a weapon of war. Agriculture has now been classed as an essential industry -- the same as the manufacture of tanks and guns.

The necessity for manpower in agriculture has become apparent to those whose responsibility it is to allocate manpower with the result that selective service now gives the same consideration to a man in a key agricultural position that it does to a man in a key position in an aircraft plant.

The importance of food as a vital, if not the most vital weapon in war, seems at last to be recognized. Further proof is the fact that the President designated Secretary of Agriculture Wickard as food administrator. In an effort to coordinate all the activities of the department for the most effective prosecution of the war, action agencies have been grouped into two simple categories, production and distribution.

The Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the Soil Conservation Service, the Farm Credit Administration, the Farm Security Administration, and sections of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Office of Agricultural War Relations comprise the production branch under the direction of Food Production Administrator Parisius.

The Agricultural Marketing Administration is the principal agency to become the Food Distribution Administration under the direction of Roy Hendrickson, to which also has been added the Sugar Agency, parts of the Bureau of Animal Industry and Office of Agricultural War Relations.

Agricultural production in the United States has been given great impetus particularly in the last three decades. State agricultural colleges, state departments of agriculture, the Extension Service and many other agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture have been working with and for farmers. Better seed selection, more effective cultural methods, pest control, scientific fertilization, mechanization, water and soil conservation and other practices have steadily increased per acre production until today we find an all-time high in American farm efficiency. In addition to the current peak in per acre production we have, of course, reached the record quantity of production.

During this period when our efforts were stressing production methods we did not devote a comparable amount of time and thought to distribution. Although we approached production scientifically, distribution, like Topsy, just "grewed." Today the farmer receives a smaller percentage of the consumer's dollar than he did twenty years ago. During these two decades the graph shows a steady decline and if continued in the same direction would result eventually in the farmer receiving such a small percentage of the consumer's dollar that he could not stay in business. This condition in the field of distribution prevailed before the present war, of course. Added to the existing complexities of distribution now are the complications of war.

We have said that the most abundant food supplies in the history of the United States are now available for distribution and yet we are rationed on sugar and coffee, and beginning next month OPA states that general ration-

ing will start. Our people rise up in their ire and scream that it doesn't make sense. It wouldn't make sense if distribution of these abundant food supplies were limited to the United States -- but, we are distributing this food now to two new customers -- and they're very large customers -- the army and our allies.

We Americans have made a decision. We have decided that we prefer the democratic way of life with its accompanying freedoms instead of slavery -- and the word slavery is no exaggeration. Slaves we will be if we don't win. There is no longer any doubt about that. Therefore we must make sacrifices. Among these sacrifices is a large percentage of our available food supplies. And aren't we all willing to take up our belts a few notches if it means that there will be fewer American boys killed? We forego new washing machines, radios and automobiles so the essential metals can be turned into munitions. We forego the pleasure of traveling so we can conserve rubber and gasoline.

We must also forego our usual eating habits so we can supply foods to most of our allied armies and also to our allied civilians to keep them from starving. And after we have limited ourselves in all these respects we still will not have enough food or munitions. Tens of thousands of our boys and millions of our allied youths will be killed as a result. The most crushing taxation that we in these rich and bountiful United States have ever known is about to descend upon us.

The greater our sacrifices now in food and materials for munitions the sooner we can stop this terrific carnage and the sooner we can stop the wastage of hundreds of billions of our dollars, which our grandchildren will still be repaying.

Let me illustrate the magnitude of our food distribution problem. The Food Distribution Administration has already purchased for lend-lease over one

and three-quarters billions of dollars worth of food. When you recall that the national farm income in 1932 was only slightly over four and a half billion dollars, the figure is impressive. Currently, farm income of course is several times this low figure. Roughly, one-quarter of our total food production is being used for our military and lend-lease.

Hitler is fighting us with food which he has stolen from the conquered countries. There is no food available to our allies from these countries. The great bread basket of Europe, running from Rumania to the Russian Ukraine and centering in Bessarabia, has been highjacked by Hitler. The German thieves have grabbed milk bottles from babies' mouths in Holland, Belgium and Denmark and have taken the cattle that produce milk, butter and cheese.

There is only one area in the world which can at the moment replenish part of these supplies and that area is the farms of the United States.

This does not mean that America is trying to maintain the standard of living in Europe on a basis comparable with that of the United States. It does not mean that these Europeans will begin to have their usual rather limited quotas of food. It merely means that we are trying -- by sharing our food with our allies -- to keep them from starving to death.

Those tenacious Russians can't be expected to push back Schickelgruber's hoards on empty stomachs. And it's just as vital to the freedom of America that Russia push back Germany as it is for our own boys to push the Japs off Guadalcanal.

Perhaps the housewives of Santa Clara County are wondering why our own military needs 30 per cent of the butter supply when only 5 per cent or so of our population is in the military service. The fact remains that American soldiers, many of whom came out of sedentary occupations and many of whom were used to butter substitutes, now are physically active for strenuously long hours and consume about five times our normal average per capita consumption of

latter. The same applies to beef and many other foods.

And don't forget that out of these allocations to the military and lend-lease must be deducted the thousands of tons of food which repose on the bottom of the seven seas as a result of ship sinkings. Remember that Secretary of War Stimson said that two out of every three ships trying to reach the boys on Bataan and Corregidor were sunk; and that the total number of cargo ships sunk in the Atlantic now approaches six hundred.

So, while the percentage of our total food supplies diverted from domestic civilian consumption looms large, the net amount of food reaching its overseas destination is a considerably lower figure.

Had we attempted to transport food supplies with usual refrigeration, weight and bulk, the shortage of ships would probably have meant our undoing. Rapid development of drying processes has meant that we can cut our weight and bulk from one-seventh to as much as one-tenth with the happy result that one cargo ship can now carry food value overseas equivalent to that formerly transported by a half-dozen ships. Fortunately, your dried fruit industry in Santa Clara County lends itself admirably to current war needs.

So much for food as a weapon of war. How about food as a peace weapon? Secretary Wickard long ago made the statement that "Food will win the war and write the peace." Only recently has the utter truth of this assertion been universally recognized.

Civilized man -- and even the uncivilized now rampant in the world -- does not differ fundamentally one whit from primitive man. The first consideration is life. There is only one absolute necessity for the maintenance of life -- and that is food. The international distribution of food from American farms can determine the fate of the world when field-fighting stops.

The battle-cry of peace from Europe and Asia will be, "When do we eat?" If we of the Allied Nations can answer this question to the satisfaction of

some five hundred million people their allegiance to our free, democratic principles will not be hard to procure. If selfishness and greed are to prevail we will lose the biggest battle of all. The millions of dead; the more millions of starving and suffering humans will have travailed in vain -- even as they did in the first World War -- and war, the like of which has not yet been seen, will come again unless we are willing to continue our sacrifices on into the era of peace.

Practically, what are we talking about? Reporters asked President Roosevelt after his address to the congress on the state of the nation if by inference he did not predict the end of the war in 1944. He declined to commit himself. Prominent military leaders, however, have been bold enough to make predictions. If we can maintain our aggressive strategy, despite probable serious setbacks, it would not be unreasonable, from all the comments, to conclude that a cessation of fighting could occur in 1944.

This would mean perhaps a year and a half of war food rationing. But if we are to win the peace it may mean an additional year and a half of food rationing in order to give us the most meager supplies for our international demands. We don't need to feel that the outlook is gloomy. On the contrary, as soon as the man-power in the warring nations can be returned to agricultural production, food supplies abroad will be developed rapidly.

We will be called upon to furnish seeds and plants in great quantities. Depleted herds of livestock cannot be replaced so rapidly. From conception to milk-in-the-pail entails a cycle of three years. And in the meantime our friends as well as our erstwhile enemies must be fed. This presumes that we have learned the lesson that national isolation no longer can exist in this modern world.

In other words, we must have peak production in agriculture for several years to come and distribution which will preclude pleasurable abdominal expansion for us in the United States during the same period.

Any audience in Santa Clara county is concerned particularly with the fate of the prune as well as other crops. In looking over some clippings the other day from your local newspapers I spotted the following headline, dated August 14, 1941: "Federal prune program assures profitable grower year." The story went on to tell that prices would be supported at $3\frac{1}{4}$ cents per pound. Today your prices are double that figure. It would be naive indeed of anyone to contend that we might expect peak production in this country without prices which give the grower a fair return.

I think it is reasonable to conclude that prune prices are pretty good. But tree fruits are not commodities which can be adjusted in production from one season to another like field crops. If we are to have a continuous, adequate supply of fresh, dried, and canned fruits, we must see that the growers get a fair return for these fruits year in and year out -- not just during the pressure of a war.

By the same token, if we are to have the necessary quantities of field crops, prices to the grower must be profitable. Some growers today are not fairing as well as prune and raisin growers. Onion raisers have had a poor price season. A recent study by a group in your neighboring county of Alameda determined that canning tomatoes were costing the grower \$18.62 per ton roadside based on a seven ton per acre yield while they were receiving about \$18.50 per ton. This meant that a grower was just about breaking even on a 7-ton yield and losing money if his yield were less. You might contend that a grower has no business raising tomatoes if he can't get more than a 7-ton yield. On the other hand, when expansion is needed in a given commodity it sometimes has to be procured at a sacrifice in yield as compared with better adapted land.

This brings us to the question of general policy in price support. It is my hope that in the future when an agency such as the Food Distribution Administration undertakes to support prices that: first, the grower receive the actual cash under the price support to which he is entitled; second, no commodity is supported at the expense of another needed commodity; it isn't fair to establish a price on one commodity which would enable a grower to compete for workers, for example, on the basis of a dollar an hour when the grower of another commodity couldn't break even if he paid only fifty cents an hour because of inequitable prices; third, grower advisory committees be established for any commodity on which price support is being considered and that these committees be consulted and their advice obtained before official action is taken.

After all, the agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture have been set up to serve the farmer. Such agencies as Triple-A and the Agricultural Marketing Administration were established as a result of nationwide demands of farmers for assistance in solving their problems. Consumer interests must be protected. Processors, transporters and others involved in food distribution must be taken into consideration also to the end that the entire food distribution program from farmer to consumer is an equitable affair.

"It's an ill wind that blows no good." The war has shown up many weaknesses in our food distribution system. We hope that we can develop improvements in the system which will redound to the benefit of both producer and consumer and make the handling of food between those two points a more efficient business.

Already, we have established advisory dried fruit committees for apricots, pears, peaches, prunes, apples, golden bleached raisins and all other varieties of raisins. Several Santa Clara County growers are members of these committees.

In concluding I should like to touch on one more matter. During times of good prices growers are inclined to forget their past troubles and take less interest in their problems of distribution. As surely as night follows day, troublesome times will confront us again in peacetime agricultural distribution. I urge all of you to continue from day to day your interest in this phase of your problem so that we who are charged with serving you may do a more effective job. "A wise nation in time of peace prepares for war and in time of war prepares for peace."

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